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English

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC), Grade 12

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Introduction

The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course (OSSLC) is a full-credit Grade 12 course that will be offered as part of the English program in Ontario secondary schools starting in the 2003–2004 school year. This document is designed for use in conjunction with *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 and 10: English, 1999; The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: English, 2000*; and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12: Program Planning and Assessment, 2000.*[1] The latter document contains information relevant to all secondary school courses and disciplines represented in the curriculum; however, the present document outlines aspects of assessment policy that are unique to the OSSLC.

Purpose of the Course

To participate fully in the society and workplace of the twenty-first century, today's students will need to be able to use language skilfully and confidently. The Ontario curriculum recognizes the central importance of reading and writing skills in learning across the curriculum and in everyday life, and prepares students for the literacy demands they will face in their postsecondary endeavours. To ensure that they have the essential competencies in reading and writing that they will need to succeed at school, at work, and in daily life, students in Ontario must demonstrate those skills as a requirement for graduation.

The standard method for assessing the literacy skills of students in Ontario for purposes of meeting the literacy requirement for graduation is the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT), implemented in the 2001–2002 school year. The Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course has been developed to provide students who have been unsuccessful on the test[2] with intensive support in achieving the required reading and writing competencies, and with an alternative means of demonstrating their literacy skills.

The reading and writing competencies required by the OSSLT form the instructional and assessment core of the course. (The comparison chart on pages 4–5 shows how the course incorporates and builds on the requirements of the test.) Students who successfully complete this course will have met the provincial literacy requirement for graduation, and will earn one credit.[3] The credit earned for successful completion of the OSSLC may be used to meet either the Grade 12 English compulsory credit requirement or the Group 1 additional compulsory credit requirement (see *Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9 to 12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999*, pp. 8–9).

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1. All curriculum documents are available both in print and on the ministry's website, at http://www.edu.gov.on.ca.

2. Students who have been eligible to write the OSSLT at least twice and who have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to take the course. If they are successful on the test, they are not eligible to take the OSSLC (except under special circumstances, at the principal's discretion).

3. The OSSLC may be offered as a full-credit course or as two half-credit courses. (For policy guidelines on half-credit courses, see *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 11 and 12: English, 2000*, p. 5.) If delivered as two half-credit courses, each half-course must incorporate expectations from all three strands *in the same proportions* as in the full-credit course. To meet the literacy requirement for graduation, students must successfully complete both half-credit courses.

Comparison of the Requirements of the OSSLT and the OSSLC

Requirements of the OSSLT*	Also required in the OSSLC	How OSSLT requirements are reflected in the requirements of the OSSLC
READING		
· Types of texts read		
The OSSLT requires students to read twelve assigned selections of varying lengths and degrees of challenge on a range of topics.		Students read many self-selected and teacher-assigned informational, narrative, and graphic texts of varying lengths and degrees of challenge on a range of topics, including topics relevant to the students' interests and postsecondary destinations.
The reading selections include:		
– informational texts	✓	
– narrative texts	✓	
– graphic texts	✓	
The emphasis in the test is on informational texts.	✓	
· Reading skills demonstrated		
Students answer questions designed to measure their skills in understanding and interpreting the texts they have read. They must demonstrate skills in three key areas:		Students demonstrate their understanding of texts and their skills in the three key areas in various ways – for example, through written and oral answers to questions, through discussions and teacher-student conferences, and through written responses to texts.
– understanding directly stated ideas and information	✓	
– understanding indirectly stated ideas and information	✓	
– making connections between personal knowledge and experiences and the ideas and information in texts	✓	
· Reading strategies used		
Students are expected to apply the following reading strategies to understand texts:		Students learn and demonstrate the ability to select and apply a range of reading strategies: • before reading, to preview texts and build on prior knowledge • during reading, to monitor comprehension and record ideas • after reading, to consolidate and extend understanding
– using knowledge of structure and organizational elements of texts to understand their meaning, purpose, and intended audience	✓	
– using visual features of texts to understand their meaning and purpose	✓	
– using knowledge and context to understand unfamiliar and technical vocabulary and language used figuratively	✓	
– using grammatical structures and punctuation to understand meaning	✓	

Requirements of the OSSLT*	Also required in the OSSLC	How OSSLT requirements are reflected in the requirements of the OSSLC
WRITING		
· Writing forms used		
The OSSLT requires students to produce four pieces of writing, one in each of the following forms:		Students are required to produce several pieces of writing, on self-selected and teacher-assigned topics, in each of the four forms. They are also asked to write in other forms relevant to their personal interests and future destinations.
– a summary	✓	
– an information paragraph	✓	
– an opinion piece ("a series of paragraphs expressing an opinion")	✓	
– a news report	✓	
· Writing skills demonstrated		
The writing tasks are designed to measure students' skills in communicating ideas and information clearly. Students must demonstrate their skills in the following key areas:		Students are required to demonstrate in their writing all of the key skills measured on the test. They also learn and are expected to demonstrate their use of the writing process (pre-writing, organizing, drafting, revising, editing), which provides a necessary framework for their writing.
– developing a main idea	✓	
– providing supporting details	✓	
– organizing and linking ideas and information	✓	
– using an appropriate tone for the specified purpose and audience	✓	
– using correct grammar and punctuation	✓	
– using correct spelling	✓	
CONDITIONS		
Students demonstrate literacy skills within the time limits of the test.		Students demonstrate literacy skills by completing a variety of tasks and assignments throughout the term and in a final evaluation (see pp. 12–13 of this document). Time is allowed for students to use reading strategies and the writing process.

*Adapted from the EQAO website, at www.eqao.com.

Benefits of the Course for Students

Students with widely ranging levels of literacy skills will require this course. Some of these students may have significant gaps in their literacy knowledge and skills. In order to "demystify" the processes of reading and writing for such students, the course focuses on the strategies that competent readers and writers use to understand texts and to write for various purposes. Students taking the course will be given opportunities to improve their knowledge of these strategies and to practise using them in order to strengthen their literacy skills.

Poorly developed literacy skills may affect students' ability to meet curriculum expectations in other subject areas besides English. To help students meet the literacy demands of their work across the curriculum, the course gives particular attention to strategies for understanding and producing informational texts.

Curriculum Expectations

The expectations identified for this course describe the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop and demonstrate in the various activities through which their achievement is assessed and evaluated.

Two sets of expectations are listed for each *strand*, or broad curriculum area, of this course. The *overall expectations* describe in general terms the knowledge and skills that students are expected to demonstrate by the end of this course. The *specific expectations* describe the expected knowledge and skills in greater detail. The specific expectations are organized under subheadings that reflect particular aspects of the required knowledge and skills and that may serve as a guide for teachers as they plan learning activities for their students. The organization of expectations in strands and subgroupings is not meant to imply that the expectations in any one strand or group are achieved independently of the expectations in the other strands or groups.

Many of the expectations are accompanied by examples, given in parentheses. These examples are meant to illustrate the kind of skill, the specific area of learning, the depth of learning, and/or the level of complexity that the expectation entails. They are intended as a guide for teachers rather than as an exhaustive or mandatory list.

Strands

The course is divided into three strands: *Building Reading Skills*; *Building Writing Skills*; and *Understanding and Assessing Growth in Literacy*.

Building Reading Skills

Students need to be able to read and understand a variety of texts accurately for a variety of school and other real-life purposes. The competent reader, according to the OSSLT criteria, is able to read informational, narrative, and graphic texts[4] with reasonable accuracy and proficiency, to understand directly and indirectly stated ideas and information, and to make connections between texts and his or her own experiences and knowledge. The competent reader reads for a variety of purposes, and is able to understand texts of varying levels of challenge.

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4. The term *graphic texts* is used, for the purposes of this course, to parallel *informational texts* and *narrative texts* as one of the three types of reading selections assigned on the test. On the test and in the course, students must demonstrate their ability to understand and interpret a variety of graphic materials as texts in themselves. It is understood, however, that "graphic texts" are often incorporated as elements of informational and narrative texts.

Reading is an active process of thinking and constructing meaning from texts. Competent readers use strategies *before they read*, to preview the text and to activate their prior knowledge of the topic; *while they read*, to track and record ideas and monitor comprehension; and *after they read*, to consolidate and extend understanding. Competent readers know that reading plays a vital role in learning, opening the door to knowledge about themselves, others, and the world.

The Reading strand of the OSSLC is designed to help struggling readers to learn and use effective strategies to understand a range of texts. It requires students to read and respond to a variety of informational texts (e.g., opinion pieces, information paragraphs, textbooks), narrative texts (e.g., newspaper reports, magazine stories, short fiction), and graphic texts (e.g., tables, line graphs and bar graphs, schedules). Students will have numerous opportunities to learn appropriate reading strategies and use them to understand directly and indirectly stated ideas and information in texts, and to make connections between personal knowledge or experience and the ideas and information in texts. As in the OSSLT, the emphasis in the course is on informational texts; however, students will also engage in independent reading for personal, school, and career-related purposes, thus going beyond the requirements of the OSSLT.

Building Writing Skills

Students need to be able to write competently for a variety of school and other real-life purposes. The competent writer, as defined by the OSSLT criteria, states and supports main ideas, organizes writing clearly and coherently, and uses the conventions of standard Canadian English.

A variety of research in the field of writing reveals that the quality of student writing is greatly enhanced when students use the writing process in their writing tasks. Unlike the OSSLT (which specifies the topics students write about and the forms of writing they produce, and sets limits on the time allowed for writing), this course gives students regular, ongoing experience in using the writing process to produce and craft their writing, and allows them to choose some of their own topics and writing forms to suit their own purposes.

To help students develop into competent writers, the Writing strand of the OSSLC requires them to produce a variety of forms of writing for school and other real-life purposes, including summaries, information paragraphs, opinion pieces (series of paragraphs expressing an opinion), and news reports. Students will use the writing process and their knowledge of the conventions of text forms to organize ideas for writing, to develop main ideas and provide supporting details, to match tone and language to purpose and audience, and to use grammar, punctuation, and spelling correctly.

Understanding and Assessing Growth in Literacy

This strand requires students to assess their growth in literacy. Students will set learning goals, monitor their improvement in literacy throughout the course, and confer with their teacher about their progress at regular intervals. Students will also maintain and manage a literacy portfolio containing their reading responses, pieces of writing, and a learning journal in which they record their goal-setting and self-monitoring activities during the course. Students will review this portfolio, both during the course and at its end, in order to assess their growth in literacy.

Teaching Approaches

As in other courses, teachers will use their professional judgement to decide which instructional methods will be most effective in promoting the learning of core knowledge and skills described in the expectations. However, because students in this course will have significant gaps in their literacy skills, direct instruction, support, and practice are necessary for student success.

No single instructional approach can address all the curriculum expectations or meet all the needs of each learner. Teachers should therefore select instructional strategies and classroom activities that are based on an assessment of students' needs, proven learning theory, and best practices. In this course, teachers should introduce a rich variety of activities that integrate reading and writing expectations and provide for the explicit teaching of knowledge and skills.

The ability to work both independently and collaboratively is important for success in the workplace and postsecondary education and is equally relevant in the context of family and community. It is therefore important for students to have opportunities to develop their language skills and knowledge in a variety of ways: individually and cooperatively; independently and with teacher direction; and through the study of examples followed by practice. Students must be able to demonstrate that they have acquired the specified knowledge and skills.

Building Confidence

Students taking this course may be doubtful that they can acquire the literacy skills they need to function effectively at school, at work, and in other everyday contexts. In seeking to meet the needs of these students, teachers should try to create a positive classroom environment that gives students the confidence to take risks as they learn and that continually encourages them to persist and improve.

To help students build confidence and to promote learning, teachers should use the approach of grouping students for purposes of instruction and support. Groupings should be flexible and should change as students' literacy skills improve. Students may be grouped in a variety of ways, including the following:

- by instructional need (e.g., group students who need to practise a specific reading or writing strategy);
- by ability to read texts at a comparable level of challenge (e.g., select texts on the same topic but at different levels of difficulty, and group students to read the texts that are appropriate to their skills);
- by shared interest in particular topics or issues (e.g., group students to generate ideas as a team before they write on a topic of shared interest);
- for purposes of effective collaboration (e.g., group students who can provide support for one another as they learn).

Building on Oral Language Skills

An important way to build reading and writing skills is to recognize and build on the strengths in oral language, in English or a first language, that many students bring to the course. When students discuss their prior knowledge of a topic or type of text before they read, they build a foundation for understanding that gives them the confidence to read a variety of texts. Similarly, the quality of students' writing improves and they become more competent as writers when they talk about their ideas at all stages of the writing process (e.g., discuss writing topics before they write; read and share their works in progress; offer suggestions to other writers for revision and editing).

Oral language experiences in large and small groups also provide opportunities for students to clarify their thinking about what they have read and to share these understandings with others – to "make visible" the often invisible reading strategies they use to understand texts. In addition, opportunities to use oral language help students to expand their vocabularies, thereby improving their fluency in reading and their ability to express themselves clearly and effectively in writing.

Developing Reading Skills

As they enter the course, students might not see themselves as readers, since many feel daunted by the complexities of the print texts they encounter in school. In reality, most students do read some types of texts regularly in their daily lives – for example, websites and e-mails. Teachers should use such familiar types of texts as a starting point to introduce students to strategies and skills they can use to understand a greater variety of informational, narrative, and graphic texts and relate them to their own knowledge and experiences.

Students' ability to read is greatly enhanced when they recognize a text as having authentic relevance to their interests and aspirations, in terms of the issues it raises and the information it contains. Teachers should therefore include a balanced selection of text forms (informational, narrative, and graphic, in both print and electronic media) at different levels of challenge, and should include texts on a range of topics that concern and interest students (e.g., on personal, social, health and safety, and career and workplace issues).

Developing Writing Skills

Students see themselves as writers when they have choices about the topics and purposes for writing, when they go through the process of generating and organizing ideas and information and conferring with others about ideas and style, and when they become accustomed to consulting resources such as grammar guides and dictionaries to help them revise, edit, and polish their writing.

Although the OSSLC requires students to produce writing on demand, developing assigned topics and using specified forms, it also provides scope for students to go beyond the specifications of the OSSLT. Teachers should use the relative flexibility this course offers to provide regular and frequent opportunities for students to practise writing primarily but not exclusively in the identified forms, on a range of self-selected topics, and for a variety of purposes.

Integrating Reading and Writing Skills

Reading and writing skills are complementary and mutually reinforcing. For this reason, many of the expectations in the Reading strand require students to demonstrate their learning through activities that also involve writing. Similarly, many of the expectations in the Writing strand require students to demonstrate their learning through activities that also involve reading.

Teachers need to support and enhance these connections by introducing a rich variety of classroom activities that integrate reading and writing and that provide opportunities for students to develop and practise these skills in conjunction with one another.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting

General and Specific Principles Guiding the Assessment of Student Achievement in the OSSLC

The general principles guiding the assessment of student work are outlined in the "Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting" section of the ministry document *Program Planning and Assessment: The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9 to 12, 2000.* These principles apply to the assessment of student work in this course.

In addition, to promote the growth in reading and writing skills of students taking this course, teachers need to ensure that their assessment practices:

- provide opportunities for frequent diagnostic assessment before the introduction of new learning (e.g., review of the OSSLT Individual Student Report [ISR]; reading and writing interviews; observation of students at work);
- provide varied, frequent, targeted, and ongoing feedback about students' work, including teacher-student conferences;
- provide multiple opportunities for students to practise skills, demonstrate achievement, and receive feedback before evaluation takes place;
- provide students with models of quality reading responses and writing pieces to guide them in improving their own work.

Overview of Assessment in the OSSLC

Assessment of student work in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course differs from assessment for other courses in a number of key ways:

- Students who receive 50 per cent or higher in the course receive a credit for the course and also are deemed to have met the secondary school literacy requirement for graduation.
- Although this course is offered in Grade 12 and represents a credit awarded in Grade 12, the standard for a pass in the course is comparable to that established by the OSSLT, which represents achievement of Grade 9 literacy expectations.
- The course has an achievement chart that describes the levels of student achievement of literacy skills. However, as the chart on page 11 shows, the levels and their associated percentage grade ranges differ from those in the achievement charts for other courses.
- This course differs from other courses in outlining specific requirements for evaluation in order to ensure alignment with the requirements of the OSSLT (see pp. 12–13).

The Literacy Portfolio

In this course, students will maintain and manage a literacy portfolio to demonstrate and help them assess their growth in reading and writing skills throughout the course. Students will use a variety of tools to record and track the range of texts they have read and the writing they have produced in the course. The portfolio will contain all works in progress and all works that have been evaluated, for both reading and writing tasks. The portfolio will also contain a

learning journal in which students set goals for improving their reading and writing skills and monitor their learning during the course.

Students will polish selected pieces from their portfolios. These final, polished pieces may be used for presentation and display, according to students' own purposes, plans, and goals (e.g., as part of a work-related interview, as part of an application to an apprenticeship or college program). Students may be guided in their selections by consultations with their teacher in this course, as well as with their subject teachers, teacher-advisers, guidance counsellors, parents, and employers.

Students will use all components of the literacy portfolio to review and reflect upon their improvement in reading and writing skills, both during and at the end of the course.

Levels of Achievement in the OSSLC

The levels of achievement for the OSSLC are outlined below. It should be noted that the descriptions of achievement reflect the literacy standards set for the OSSLT. To meet the literacy standard required for graduation, students must demonstrate a moderate level of skill in reading and writing. Students who show limited skill in reading and writing will not pass the course. Note also that the percentage grade ranges in the chart are not aligned with the levels of achievement defined in other curriculum documents.

Overview of the Achievement Chart

Percentage Grade Range	Description of the Level of Literacy Achieved
80–100%	A *skilful* and *effective* performance in reading and writing. The student has *significantly exceeded* the level of literacy required for graduation, and earns a credit for the course.
65–79%	Performance that shows *considerable* skill in reading and writing. The student has *exceeded* the level of literacy required for graduation, and earns a credit for the course.
50–64%	Performance that shows *moderate* skill in reading and writing. The student has *achieved* the level of literacy required for graduation, and earns a credit for the course.
0–49%	Performance that shows *limited* reading and writing skills. The student may be *approaching* the level of literacy required for graduation but cannot be deemed to have met the requirement and does not earn a credit for the course.

A mark of 50 per cent represents both a pass in the course and the achievement of the literacy standard required for graduation.

Reporting on Student Achievement

The final grade recorded in the provincial report card represents a student's level of achievement of the curriculum expectations for the course. As in other courses, teachers will also report on the student's development of learning skills in the course.

The student's final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- 70 per cent of the grade will be based on evaluations conducted *throughout* the course, as specified below;
- 30 per cent of the grade will be based on a final evaluation of reading and writing skills, to be administered *towards the end of the course*, as specified below.

As in all of their courses, students must be provided with numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their achievement of the curriculum expectations across all four categories of knowledge and skills.

Evaluations During the Term: 70 Per Cent of the Student's Grade

Evaluations during the term will be based on a variety of teacher-assigned and student-selected reading and writing tasks and will take place towards the end of units. (Evaluations should be spread out evenly over the term rather than being grouped towards the end of the term.) The evaluations that meet the minimum requirements specified below must be based on independent demonstrations of students' knowledge and skills; however, other evaluations may be based on work completed independently or collaboratively (e.g., in response to a rich performance task). Evaluations of students' performance on reading and writing tasks should include evaluation of their use of reading strategies and of the writing process, respectively. The minimum requirements for evaluations during the term are as follows:

Reading

Following extensive practice in reading a variety of texts, students will independently demonstrate for evaluation their understanding of a **minimum** of *two narrative texts*, *four graphic texts*, and *five informational texts*. These texts will be teacher-selected, and both the texts and the tasks will be identical for all students in the class.

Writing

Following extensive practice with writing in a variety of forms, students will independently produce for evaluation writing on demand, as follows: a **minimum** of *one summary*, *one information paragraph*, *two series of paragraphs expressing an opinion*, and *two news reports*. Topics will be assigned by the teacher, and the tasks will be identical for all students in the class.

Final Evaluation: 30 Per Cent of the Student's Grade

For the 30 per cent final evaluation, all students will independently demonstrate the reading and writing skills they have developed in this course and will reflect upon their growth in literacy skills.

This culminating demonstration of literacy knowledge and skills should be in the form of performance tasks that are designed to show the range of what students know and are able to do in reading and writing. The 30 per cent final evaluation should not be designed to replicate the OSSLT. To provide the optimum conditions for success, teachers should ensure that students have the opportunity to use the reading strategies they have learned to perform the reading tasks and to use the writing process to perform the writing tasks, demonstrating their skills under normal class conditions with sufficient time to allow them to do quality work.

During the time provided for the 30 per cent final evaluation, it is expected that no new teaching of concepts and skills will take place. Rather, at this time, students consolidate and synthesize what they have learned in the course in order to demonstrate the reading and writing skills they have acquired. All students will demonstrate their knowledge and skills independently, with the teacher acting as a facilitator of the process.

Teachers should give careful thought to creating a meaningful context for the final 30 per cent evaluation. Topics or themes that are relevant and appropriate to the students' interests, aspirations, and future destinations (e.g., topics related to future schooling or work, or significant issues) will help students become fully engaged in the performance tasks and encourage them to do their best work.

For the 30 per cent final evaluation students will demonstrate their reading and writing skills through the following performance tasks:

Reading

- Students will read a teacher-selected text related to the selected topic or theme. In writing or through a conference with the teacher, students will respond to or answer questions about the text. These responses require students to demonstrate their achievement in terms of the three reading skills: understanding directly stated ideas and information in a text; understanding indirectly stated ideas and information in a text; and making connections between their personal knowledge or experiences and the ideas and information in the text.

Writing

- The teacher will select an additional text of 250 to 300 words, at an appropriate level of challenge, for students to read. Students will write a *summary* of the selected text.
- Students will record and organize the information they have gathered about a topic related to an assigned class activity and construct an *information paragraph* appropriate to a specific audience and purpose.

Reflection and Self-Assessment

- Students will write an assessment of their growth in reading and writing skills throughout the course, based on a review of the contents of their portfolio.

Accommodations for Students With Special Needs

Accommodations specified in a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) must be available to students throughout the course. However, because achievement of the expectations in this course represents achievement of the literacy requirement for graduation, no modifications of the expectations are permitted.

The Achievement Chart for the OSSLC

The achievement chart that follows identifies four categories of knowledge and skills in reading and writing – Knowledge/Understanding, Thinking/Inquiry, Communication, and Application. These categories encompass all the curriculum expectations in the course. For each of the category statements in the left-hand column, the levels of student achievement are described. As noted earlier (pp. 10 and 11), the levels and their percentage grade ranges differ from those in the achievement charts for other courses.

The achievement chart is meant to guide teachers in:

- planning instruction and learning activities that will lead to the achievement of the curriculum expectations in a course;
- planning assessment strategies that will accurately assess students' achievement of the curriculum expectations;
- selecting samples of student work that provide evidence of achievement at particular levels;
- providing descriptive feedback to students on their current achievement and suggesting strategies for improvement;
- determining, towards the end of a course, the student's most consistent level of achievement of the curriculum expectations as reflected in his or her course work;
- assigning a final grade.

The achievement chart can guide students in:

- assessing their own learning;
- planning strategies for improvement, with the help of their teachers.

The achievement chart provides a standard, province-wide method for teachers to use in assessing and evaluating their students' achievement. When planning courses and assessment, teachers should review the required curriculum expectations and link them to the categories to which they relate. They should ensure that all the expectations are accounted for in instruction, and that achievement of the expectations is assessed within the appropriate categories. The descriptions of the levels of achievement given in the chart should be used to identify the level at which the student has achieved the expectations.

Achievement Chart – Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course, Grade 12

Categories	Approaching the Required Level of Literacy 0–49%	Achieving the Required Level of Literacy 50–64%	Exceeding the Required Level of Literacy 65–79%	Significantly Exceeding the Required Level of Literacy 80–100%
Knowledge/ Understanding	The student:			
– knowledge of forms of texts (e.g., of various forms of informational, narrative, and graphic texts)	– demonstrates limited knowledge of forms	– demonstrates adequate knowledge of forms	– demonstrates considerable knowledge of forms	– demonstrates thorough knowledge of forms
– understanding of texts read (e.g., understanding of directly stated and indirectly stated information and ideas; understanding of relationships between ideas; understanding of concepts and themes)	– demonstrates limited understanding of texts read	– demonstrates a reasonable understanding of texts read	– demonstrates considerable understanding of texts read	– demonstrates thorough and insightful understanding of texts read
– knowledge of strategies, processes, and conventions (e.g., reading strategies; the writing process; conventions of grammar, usage, and spelling)	– demonstrates limited knowledge of strategies, processes, and conventions	– demonstrates adequate knowledge of strategies, processes, and conventions	– demonstrates considerable knowledge of strategies, processes, and conventions	– demonstrates thorough knowledge of strategies, processes, and conventions
– understanding of the importance of reading and writing skills (e.g., for learning in all subjects; in the workplace)	– demonstrates limited understanding of the importance of literacy skills	– demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the importance of literacy skills	– demonstrates considerable understanding of the importance of literacy skills	– demonstrates thorough understanding of the importance of literacy skills
Thinking/Inquiry	The student:			
– critical and creative thinking skills (e.g., *in reading*: making inferences, connecting ideas, integrating personal knowledge to extend meaning; *in writing*: developing ideas; selecting, evaluating, and organizing information; explaining; forming conclusions)	– demonstrates limited competence in using critical and creative thinking skills	– demonstrates moderate competence in using critical and creative thinking skills	– demonstrates considerable competence in using critical and creative thinking skills	– demonstrates a high degree of competence in using critical and creative thinking skills
– self-assessment skills (e.g., setting goals for improving reading and writing skills; reflecting on and assessing progress)	– demonstrates limited competence in using self-assessment skills	– demonstrates moderate competence in using self-assessment skills	– demonstrates considerable competence in using self-assessment skills	– demonstrates a high degree of competence in using self-assessment skills

Categories	Approaching the Required Level of Literacy 0–49%	Achieving the Required Level of Literacy 50–64%	Exceeding the Required Level of Literacy 65–79%	Significantly Exceeding the Required Level of Literacy 80–100%
Communication	**The student:**			
– communication of ideas and information (e.g., in reading responses; in writing pieces)	– communicates ideas and information with limited clarity	– communicates ideas and information with moderate clarity	– communicates ideas and information with considerable clarity	– communicates ideas and information with a high degree of clarity
– communication for different audiences and purposes (e.g., choice of tone and language)	– communicates ideas and information for different audiences and purposes with limited appropriateness	– communicates ideas and information for different audiences and purposes with moderate appropriateness and effectiveness	– communicates ideas and information for different audiences and purposes appropriately and effectively	– communicates ideas and information for different audiences and purposes appropriately and with a high degree of effectiveness
– use of various forms of communication (e.g., summaries, information paragraphs, opinion pieces, news reports)	– demonstrates limited command of the various forms	– demonstrates moderate command of the various forms	– demonstrates considerable command of the various forms	– demonstrates extensive command of the various forms
Application	**The student:**			
– application of required language conventions (e.g., grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation)	– uses the required language conventions with limited accuracy and effectiveness	– uses the required language conventions with a moderate degree of accuracy and effectiveness	– uses the required language conventions with considerable accuracy and effectiveness	– uses the required language conventions with a high degree of accuracy and effectiveness
– application of reading strategies (e.g., skimming, scanning, using cues from context)	– uses reading strategies with limited competence	– uses reading strategies with moderate competence	– uses reading strategies with considerable competence	– uses reading strategies with a high degree of competence
– application of the writing process (e.g., development and organization of ideas; revision)	– uses the writing process with limited competence	– uses the writing process with moderate competence	– uses the writing process with considerable competence	– uses the writing process with a high degree of competence
– application of literacy skills in new contexts (e.g., reading a new text; writing about a previously unfamiliar topic)	– uses literacy skills in new contexts with limited effectiveness	– uses literacy skills in new contexts with moderate effectiveness	– uses literacy skills in new contexts with considerable effectiveness	– uses literacy skills in new contexts with a high degree of effectiveness

Note: A student whose achievement is below 50% at the end of the course will not obtain a credit for the course and will not have met the literacy requirement for graduation.

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Course, Grade 12 (OLC4O)

This course is designed to help students acquire and demonstrate the cross-curricular literacy skills that are evaluated by the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT). Students who complete the course successfully will meet the provincial literacy requirement for graduation. Students will read a variety of informational, narrative, and graphic texts and will produce a variety of forms of writing, including summaries, information paragraphs, opinion pieces, and news reports. Students will also maintain and manage a portfolio containing a record of their reading experiences and samples of their writing.

Eligibility requirement: Students who have been eligible to write the OSSLT at least twice and who have been unsuccessful at least once are eligible to take the course. (Students who have already met the literacy requirement for graduation may be eligible to take the course under special circumstances, at the discretion of the principal.)

Building Reading Skills

Overall Expectations

By the end of this course, students will:

- demonstrate the ability to read and respond to a variety of texts;
- demonstrate understanding of the organizational structure and features of a variety of informational, narrative, and graphic texts, including information paragraphs, opinion pieces, textbooks, newspaper reports and magazine stories, and short fiction;
- demonstrate understanding of the content and meaning of informational, narrative, and graphic texts that they have read using a variety of reading strategies;
- use a variety of strategies to understand unfamiliar and specialized words and expressions in informational, narrative, and graphic texts.

Specific Expectations

Reading and Responding to Texts

By the end of this course, students will:

- demonstrate that they have read a variety of student-selected and teacher-selected texts, including informational, narrative, and graphic texts (e.g., by keeping a record in a reading log);*
- demonstrate the ability to read independently for personal, school-related, and career-related purposes (e.g., by writing a response to a text, answering assigned questions about a text, creating a summary of events outlined in a newspaper report, comparing descriptions of apprenticeship programs and writing a covering letter of application to one of the programs);
- describe, orally and/or in writing, personally relevant texts they have read and their responses to them (e.g., read an excerpt of a selected text to a small group or the whole class; write a response to a text; recommend a text to a peer);
- use oral language skills, in English or a first language, to support and enhance their reading experiences (e.g., by activating and building on prior knowledge through small-group discussion; by asking questions to gather relevant information before reading or to clarify instructions for reading tasks).

Understanding the Forms of Texts

By the end of this course, students will:

Informational Texts

- use knowledge of the organizational structure of information paragraphs to identify the main idea (often in the topic sentence) and supporting details;
- use knowledge of the organizational structure of opinion pieces (e.g., editorials, proposals, short essays in magazines or newspapers) to identify opinions, main ideas or arguments, and supporting details;
- use knowledge of the organizational structure and features of textbooks to locate main ideas and specific information (e.g., use table of contents to locate chapters; use index to locate specific information; use headings, subheadings, and bold and italic type to identify main ideas; use glossaries to find definitions);

*During the term, students will read and independently demonstrate for evaluation their understanding of a *minimum* of two narrative texts, four graphic texts, and five informational texts selected by the teacher. For further information about these minimum term requirements and about the reading tasks that students must perform as part of the final evaluation, see pages 12–13.

– demonstrate understanding of how the organizational structure of informational texts is related to the audience and the purpose for writing (e.g., by comparing the structure, audience, and purpose in an opinion piece and a report on a similar topic);
– use cue words and features of print to understand the organization and relationship of ideas in the text (e.g., cue words: *first*, *then*, *next* signal a chronological pattern; *similarly*, *in contrast* signal a compare-and-contrast structure);

Narrative Texts

– use knowledge of the organizational structure of different types of non-fiction narratives (e.g., anecdote, recounting of events, biography, news report) and short fiction (e.g., dialogue, short story) to identify sequence of events and main ideas;
– use knowledge of narrative structure to identify ways in which fiction and non-fiction narratives are similar (e.g., both may use chronological order, have a distinct setting, develop a character);

Graphic Texts

– use knowledge of the organizational structure (e.g., layout, grid pattern) of a variety of graphic texts (e.g., schedules, tables, graphs, maps, labelled diagrams, site maps, websites) to identify the purpose of the text, locate information, and extract pertinent details;
– explain how the form of a graphic text helps the reader understand the information or message (e.g., explain to a partner how a graph helps the reader understand the data; explain why the information in a schedule is displayed in a particular way).

Using Reading Strategies to Understand Texts

By the end of this course, students will:

Before Reading

– choose an appropriate approach to reading a text to match the purpose for reading (e.g., scan to locate the relevant section in a text; skim to identify the main point; read closely to clarify one's obligations in a contract);
– use appropriate pre-reading strategies to preview new texts, including:
  • *Informational texts* (e.g., scan for text features such as headings and for embedded graphics to make predictions about content);
  • *Narrative texts* (e.g., read the title and opening paragraph to make predictions about content);
  • *Graphic texts* (e.g., scan for distinguishing features of *layout*, such as a grid pattern; *design*, such as levels of heads; and *print*, such as headings/labels, to preview the content and identify the purpose of the text);
– use appropriate strategies to activate and build on prior knowledge of the content of the informational, narrative, or graphic selections (e.g., brainstorm about a topic);

During and After Reading

– use appropriate strategies to monitor comprehension when reading informational and narrative texts (e.g., pose questions to check understanding; reread passages to clarify understanding; adjust reading speed to suit the complexity of the text);
– use appropriate strategies to track and record ideas and information while reading informational and narrative texts (e.g., use highlighter, note-taking, or a visual organizer to identify key facts, points in an argument, or events in a narrative);

- use appropriate strategies to locate information in different types of texts, including:
  - *Informational texts* (e.g., search for key words from a question about the selection to locate specific information);
  - *Narrative texts* (e.g., reread the first sentence of successive paragraphs to identify the sequence of events and/or transitions in scene or changes in speaker);
  - *Graphic texts* (e.g., use a ruler to read along lines in a table; read up from the horizontal axis and across from the vertical axis to find a point on a graph);
- use appropriate strategies to make inferences about and interpret different types of texts, including:
  - *Informational texts* (e.g., while reading, predict a writer's intentions, conclusions, or biases based on his/her presentation of the facts);
  - *Narrative texts* (e.g., pose questions about the explanations for people's actions given in a workplace incident report: "Are the explanations convincing?", "Do they account for all the facts?", "How could the incident be resolved?");
  - *Graphic texts* (e.g., compare the sizes of different visual features to identify the elements that are most/least important in an advertisement);
- make connections between personal experiences and the content of texts to consolidate and extend understanding of different types of texts, including:
  - *Informational texts* (e.g., explain why they agree or disagree with an author's point of view; explain how they would use the information provided in an information paragraph in their own lives);
  - *Narrative texts* (e.g., compare a decision made by a person in a narrative with the choice they would have made in the same situation);
  - *Graphic texts* (e.g., relate information from graphic texts to their own purposes for reading and/or to information from other sources – for example, by using a road map to help plan a trip);
- demonstrate understanding of a variety of informational, narrative, and graphic texts commonly read in daily life (e.g., recipes, manuals, instructions, invoices, e-mails, encyclopedia entries, pamphlets, news reports, short stories, train schedules, bar graphs) by using and/or responding to them appropriately.

Using Strategies to Understand New Words and Expressions and to Build Vocabulary

By the end of this course, students will:

- use appropriate strategies to discover the meaning of unfamiliar and technical words encountered in their reading (e.g., use print, online, and bilingual dictionaries; use context to determine the meaning of new words; create concept maps using new words; build a bank of sight words to increase reading fluency);
- use appropriate strategies to discover the meaning of unfamiliar idiomatic expressions encountered in their reading (e.g., "read past" an unfamiliar expression to gain a sense of the sentence, then make a guess as to its meaning; use or create dictionaries of phrases and expressions);
- use appropriate strategies to expand their vocabulary through reading (e.g., use knowledge of roots, prefixes, and suffixes to create new words; contribute to class word walls; create personal dictionaries of new words encountered in their reading).

Building Writing Skills

Overall Expectations

By the end of this course, students will:

- demonstrate the ability to use the writing process by generating and organizing ideas and producing first drafts, revised drafts, and final polished pieces to complete a variety of writing tasks;
- use knowledge of writing forms, and of the connections between form, audience, and purpose, to write summaries, information paragraphs, opinion pieces (i.e., series of paragraphs expressing an opinion), news reports, and personal reflections, incorporating graphic elements where necessary and appropriate.

Specific Expectations

Using the Writing Process

By the end of this course, students will:

- identify the topic, the audience, the purpose for writing, and the requirements of the particular writing form;
- use pre-writing strategies to generate ideas for writing (e.g., brainstorming; constructing mind maps and semantic webs);
- use oral language skills, in English or a first language, to develop content for writing (e.g., discuss prior knowledge of the topic and experiences for writing; ask questions to clarify instructions; share ideas for writing with peers);
- use appropriate strategies for gathering supporting ideas and information from print and electronic sources (e.g., pose questions to guide their search; make jot notes to record information in their own words; assess the accuracy and relevance of information and the reliability of sources);
- use appropriate strategies to organize ideas and information for writing (e.g., sort ideas into categories for an information paragraph; use a checklist to plan an incident report; create headings to guide the writing of a résumé; create an outline with an introduction/topic sentence, body, and conclusion);
- create a first draft that includes the main and supporting ideas in the required form (e.g., that uses distinct paragraphs where the form requires);
- revise drafts to ensure that ideas are presented in a logical order, to discard irrelevant ideas and information, to add details where information is insufficient, and to ensure a tone and level of language appropriate to the audience and purpose, using appropriate strategies (e.g., use checklists; discuss the draft with a peer or the teacher);
- quote and/or cite information from sources accurately, and acknowledge all sources of ideas and information used in written work;
- use appropriate strategies to edit written work (e.g., read aloud to detect errors; correct errors using personal checklists of "look-fors", a shared word/grammar wall, a personal grammar guide, and/or computer spelling and grammar programs) to achieve accuracy in the use of the conventions of standard Canadian English, including the requirements of grammar, usage, spelling, and punctuation listed below:

Grammar and Usage

- write complete and correct sentences
- use consistent and appropriate verb tense and voice
- make verbs agree with subjects
- make pronouns agree with their antecedents in number and gender

Spelling

- use knowledge of spelling patterns and rules, and a variety of appropriate resources, to spell correctly (e.g., personal dictionaries, class word walls, sound-based and visual spelling strategies)

Punctuation

- use punctuation correctly, including period, question mark, exclamation mark, comma, dash, apostrophe, colon, quotation marks, parentheses, and ellipses

Using Knowledge of Forms in Writing

By the end of this course, students will:

- explain the purpose and uses of summaries (e.g., to provide a synopsis of a story, book, or movie for a friend; to sum up the conclusions of a report);
- construct *summaries* that clearly state the main idea and include important supporting details (e.g., a summary of a student code of conduct, a chapter in a textbook, or a set of job requirements);*
- explain the purpose and uses of information paragraphs (e.g., to outline safety procedures; to describe the requirements of a job; to give information about new equipment; to report on own progress);
- construct clear, complete *information paragraphs*, some with graphic elements, for a variety of purposes, using correct paragraph structure (e.g., an outline of research on a particular subject; an illustrated explanation of a procedure; a career description);*
- explain the purpose and uses of opinion pieces (e.g., to justify a point of view; to persuade; to convince);
- construct a *series of paragraphs, clearly stating an opinion* in the opening paragraph and supporting it in subsequent paragraphs with clear, sufficient, and convincing reasons (e.g., to persuade fellow students to recycle pop cans; to convince an employer to adopt a flex work schedule);*
- use knowledge of how to write summaries, information paragraphs, and opinion pieces to produce informational writing for a variety of personal and school-related purposes (e.g., résumés, covering letters, reports);
- explain the purpose and uses of news reports (e.g., to inform, to entertain, to arouse interest, to prompt further research);
- construct clear, coherent, and objective *news reports* that include relevant facts, information, and supporting details, using the five-questions model – Who? What? Where? When? Why? (e.g., a news report about a current event; a news report about a historical event they have studied in a history course; a traveller's report from another country);*
- use knowledge of how to write news reports to create narratives related to other subject areas and personal interests (e.g., a biography of a historical figure; a recounting of a sports or musical event; an incident report about a job-related issue);

*During the term, students will independently produce for evaluation a *minimum* of one summary, one information paragraph, two series of paragraphs expressing an opinion, and two news reports. For further information about these minimum term requirements and about the writing tasks that students must perform as part of the final evaluation, see pages 12–13.

- explain the purpose and uses of personal reflections (e.g., for self-assessment; to demonstrate personal growth in reading and writing; to set goals);
- construct personal reflections, in paragraph form, choosing a clear focus and using appropriate examples to explain their thinking (e.g., set goals for reading or writing; reflect about an important accomplishment in their personal lives; explain an important skill they've acquired);
- explain the purpose and uses of other non-fiction narrative forms, such as incident reports, recountings, or biographies/autobiographies (e.g., to provide a first-person account of an event; to tell someone's life story from an objective, "biographer's" point of view).

Understanding and Assessing Growth in Literacy

Overall Expectations

By the end of this course, students will:

- demonstrate understanding of the importance of communication skills in their everyday lives – at school, at work, and at home;
- demonstrate understanding of their own roles and responsibilities in the learning process;
- demonstrate understanding of the reading and writing processes and of the role of reading and writing in learning;
- demonstrate understanding of their own growth in literacy during the course.

Specific Expectations

Understanding the Importance of Communication Skills in Their Lives

By the end of this course, students will:

- describe the communication skills they need to function effectively in a variety of situations at school, at work and in daily life (e.g., the ability to read efficiently, to listen effectively, to speak and write correctly and using an appropriate level of language);
- explain how the ability to read, write, listen, and speak effectively can help them to succeed at school, at work, and in their personal lives (e.g., communication skills can help them to conduct research effectively, perform well in a job interview, present a point of view clearly, work cooperatively with others).

Understanding Their Own Role in the Learning Process

By the end of this course, students will:

- identify the behaviours and attitudes they need to promote their own learning (e.g., active participation, confidence in their ability to improve, persistence, practice, willingness to reflect on their learning process and learn from their mistakes).

Understanding the Reading and Writing Processes and the Role of Reading and Writing in Learning

By the end of this course, students will:

- demonstrate understanding that reading is an active process of thinking and constructing meaning (e.g., by describing, in a conference with the teacher, how they use strategies before, during, and after reading to determine meaning and extract information);
- demonstrate understanding that the purpose for reading or the requirements of the reading task influence their approach to reading a text (e.g., by describing different approaches and the purposes for which they can be used – for example, skimming can be used to discover the gist of a narrative; close reading can be used to understand complex instructions);
- demonstrate understanding that writing is a process that involves a range of thinking and composing skills (e.g., by describing, in a small-group discussion, how they use strategies before, during, and after writing to explore, organize, and express ideas and to polish final copy);

- demonstrate understanding that their subject, audience, and purpose for writing influence their choices of form, tone, and level of language (e.g., by accurately describing, in a conference with the teacher, the form, style, and tone of a piece of writing and explaining why they are appropriate to the subject, audience, and purpose for writing);
- demonstrate understanding of the role of reading and writing in the learning process (e.g., by describing how they use reading and writing to locate and understand information in different subject areas; to generate, explore, and clarify ideas and thinking; to communicate for a variety of purposes; to express themselves; and to reflect on and extend their learning).

Using the Portfolio to Assess Their Growth in Literacy Skills

By the end of this course, students will have compiled a literacy portfolio demonstrating their growth in literacy skills during the course. Each student's literacy portfolio will contain:

- an inventory, with completion dates, of all the texts read and the reading responses produced;
- an inventory, with completion dates, of all the pieces of writing produced, identifying them as working drafts, revised drafts for evaluation, or polished pieces;
- all working drafts of reading responses and writing selections produced during the course;
- all reading responses and writing selections submitted for evaluation during the course;
- all pieces that have been polished (e.g., for presentation and display);
- a learning journal documenting the steps taken to monitor their learning during the year (e.g., a written self-assessment of their skills at the beginning of the course; an outline of their goals for achieving the required level of skill in reading and writing; a learning plan; checklists and other types of progress reports; a record of regular student-teacher conferences to review goals and assess progress).

In using the portfolio to assess their growth in literacy skills, students will:

- for each of the required types of texts read (i.e., informational, narrative, graphic) and forms of writing produced (i.e., summary, information paragraph, opinion piece, news report), decide independently which are their most successful reading responses and pieces of writing and explain briefly, in writing, the reasons for their choice;
- review the record of their progress in their learning journal, as well as the reading-response and writing samples produced during the course, in order to describe their growth in reading and writing skills throughout the course (e.g., in a written self-reflection).

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